

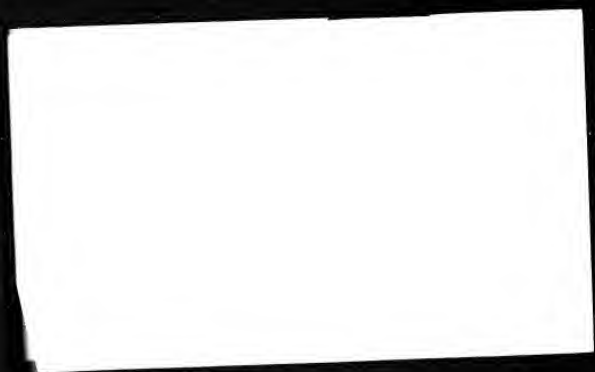


# **HOW TO WRITE A COMPETITIVE GRANT PROPOSAL**

MH00D4137

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Public Health Service  
Office of Minority Health



**HOW TO  
WRITE  
A COMPETITIVE  
GRANT PROPOSAL**

The material contained herein is provided as instructional material only, and no guarantee of grant award should be assumed. Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors, and are not endorsed, nor do they reflect those of the Office of Minority Health or the Department of Health and Human Services.

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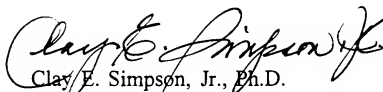


# FOREWORD

In keeping with the Office of Minority Health's mission to improve the health of racial and ethnic populations through the development of health policies and programs, it is my pleasure to offer to the community this programming guide. The guide's purpose is to assist you in preparing competitive project proposals. It is my deepest conviction that without the necessary support and tools, like programming guidance, minority communities will not be able to participate in improving their health status which is crucial for an enhanced quality of life.

The Federal funds allocated for community health projects are shrinking daily. In order for minority communities to compete, they have to be able to write competitive grant proposals and implement projects effectively. The participation of community-based organizations has to be expanded rather than diminished to meet the public health challenges of today: violence, HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, infant mortality, cardiovascular disease and stroke, cancer, and diabetes. These problems will only be resolved by cooperation, creative solutions, and hard work. We look forward to working with you.

The Office of Minority Health appreciates the work of Jaime Henriquez in the preparation of this guide.



Clay E. Simpson, Jr., Ph.D.

Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health

Public Health Service

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services





# PREFACE

The following document is a compilation of ideas and text selected from the publications listed on the last page and reprinted with permission. We would like to thank the following for allowing us to incorporate some of their ideas in this text: Dr. Mary Hall, Getting Funded; Roy Meador, Guidelines for Preparing Proposals, and the United States Conference of Mayors, Proposal Writing for HIV/AIDS Prevention Grants. The Office of Minority Health (OMH) hopes you will find the ideas presented here useful and interesting enough to read the original works, which provide more information. In addition, you may call the OMH Resource Center (1-800-444-6472) to obtain a listing of other useful publications.



# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this publication is to assist you in preparing a competitive project proposal for OMH and provide you with general guidelines regarding proposal writing.

There are numerous public health problems that community-based organizations (CBOs) can solve within their own individual communities. OMH wants to work with you to improve your community's health. Federal, state, and private funds and technical assistance are available to support projects. However, we all know that problems are not solved by good intentions and/or money alone. Problems are solved with knowledge, planning, time, resources, and the will to see the project through to completion. We know that a poorly planned project leads to failure because the project staff do not know where they are going or/and how they will get there. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Government and foundation grant reviewers find that at least half of the proposals they receive are not funded because they are poorly organized or non-conforming (i.e., did not follow the Request for Application's (RFA's) guidelines). An analysis of more than 700 proposals rejected by the U.S. Public Health Service showed the following reasons for not being recommended for funding<sup>1</sup>:

Reasons for not receiving a grant	% of Total
Inadequate planning and carelessly prepared applications	39%
Competency of applicant not shown	38%
Nature of the project	18%
Miscellaneous	5%

Thirty nine percent of the proposals were not recommended for funding because they lacked planning and were poorly organized. In addition, 38 percent failed because organizations did not demonstrate the necessary experience to implement the project. Most of the applicants were essentially qualified for the projects they proposed according to the findings, but their proposals simply did not make those qualifications clear. Keep in mind, the reviewers do not know how good your organization is or your intentions; *they can only base their opinion on what you present in the project proposal.*

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<sup>1</sup>Meador, Roy: Guidelines for Preparing Proposals, p. 96, 2nd ed. Chelsea: Lewis Publishers, Inc., 1991.

Do not wait for a RFA announcement to begin working on your project proposal. Most RFAs allow you generally 30 to 60 days from announcement to submission date. Be prepared. Plan to get a head start. There are activities you can work on before the RFA is ever published in the "Federal Register." You can gather statistics and data, start working on the problem statement, preparing the community, making contacts with other agencies for future letters of support. There are many activities that can be started before the announcement. Your advance work will give you more time to devote to writing the proposal.

A successful project proposal is the result of hard work. Devote adequate time to insuring that the community is involved and committed, and to writing the proposal. If you do not have the required time, hire a technical writer to assist you. Write and rewrite the proposal until you and your reviewers are satisfied. *Revisions are essential and cannot be stressed enough.* Have project staff and community people review the proposal critically: Is the writing clear and concise? Is the problem focused and a demonstrated community priority? Will the resolution of the problem improve the community's quality of life? Does an objective describe only one activity? Do the objectives make sense? Are you following the RFA instructions and page requirements? Are you answering the reviewer's potential questions? OR Are you creating new questions? Are you turning the reviewer against your proposal by not following instructions? Win the reviewer over by planning, answering questions, following instructions, and revising and polishing. A well thought out, clear, and logical proposal will pave the way for a successful project, not only at the funding period, but more importantly during the implementation and evaluation phases. We want you to succeed.

# WHAT FUNDERS WANT

To write a successful competitive proposal, it is important to know what a funder is looking for and that the announcement matches your organization's mission. If the purpose of the RFA does not match your organization's mission, stop and reconsider. You may be wasting your time because the proposal will be returned as non-conforming. Reviewers are trained to look for this inconsistency.

A proposal submitted in response to a RFA has no place for "poetic license." An amazing number of those submitting proposals simply do not bother to read and follow instructions. If you do not follow the instructions, you run the risk of having your proposal returned to you as non-conforming. Incomplete applications are returned before the review process.

Funders want to award grants to CBOs that will carry out effective projects. *When writing a proposal, you must convey and document that the proposed project is needed and your organization has the experience and capability to implement the project successfully.* A well written proposal for a weak or unnecessary project or a poorly written proposal for an innovative project idea will cause reviewers to question the capability of the applicant as well as the applicant's understanding of the problem.

Frequently, project proposals fail to be explicit. They do not spell out precisely what methods will be used, what steps will be taken, and what schedule will be met in reaching objectives. The reasons for vagueness are understandable. The temptation is strong to avoid being tied down to specifics; but giving in to this temptation produces a proposal that is likely to strike reviewers as indefinite, speculative, wishy-washy, and incomplete. In the project proposal, establish that you have reached specific decisions, know what you are doing and planning to do upon funding. Above all, *demonstrate* your expertise.

A well-written proposal is one that is clear, concise, readable, and does not have typographical or grammatical errors. Keep the language simple and to the point; and please avoid jargon.

The proposal must demonstrate:

- The community (target population) has been involved in the design of the project;
- The project is conducted in the language and cultural context that is most appropriate for the individuals for whom the information and/or services are intended;

- The project's goal is important and will deal with a critical identified need that can be addressed and fulfilled, and the goal is related to the RFA and your organization's mission;
- An effective, realistic, attainable, and feasible workplan/strategy has been selected;
- The project can be monitored and evaluated within specific time frames;
- A concrete product and/or outcome can be expected at the project's end;
- The project staff and the organization have the capacity, credibility, capability, and experience needed to effectively implement the project;
- The proposal has been discussed with others in the community and is not an unnecessary duplication;
- The budget is realistic; and
- The project is relevant to the funding source.

Your project proposal should convey a need and discuss how the project will address the need in a logical and organized manner.

Do not be afraid to consult a specialist or the funding source for technical assistance. No one expects you to be an expert in all aspects of a project's development. *Ask someone not involved with the project to critique what you have written and to see if the proposal makes sense and follows instructions.* Is the project "doable?" A revised or modified proposal will only improve the likelihood of having the proposal approved and/or possibly funded.

## CULTURAL COMPETENCY

It is our policy that all activities supported by OMH must be conducted in the language and cultural context that is most appropriate for the individuals for whom the information and/or services are intended.

Cultural competency questions that should be addressed in the proposal include:

- What language(s) is most understood or used by the community?
- Will the proposed workplan be accepted by the community?

- Are the project materials and approaches relevant to the community?
- Does the proposed project staff resemble the community?
- Does the proposed project staff have the essential skills necessary to implement the project?

# REVIEW CRITERIA

The following is an example of the review criteria typically used by OMH proposal reviewers (see complete set of review criteria in the appendix) to rate the technical merit of proposals. These criteria specifically apply to coalition building projects. You should have a clear understanding of the meaning of the criteria established by the funders. If the review criteria have not been explained in the RFA, or you do not understand this section, you should call the funder directly for clarification.

OMH applications are evaluated by Federal or non-Federal reviewers chosen for their expertise in minority health and experience with similar projects.

Sample review criterion:

**REVIEW CRITERIA:** Applications will be reviewed and evaluated for technical merit and consistency with the requirements of the announcement. The following criteria under the listed headings are of specific importance. (An indication of the quantitative weight appears in parentheses after each heading based on each proposal requirement):

## I. Needs Assessment [20%]

The proposal should reflect the applicant's understanding of the problem and the organizational capacity and experience in providing services to the target population. Criteria include:

- Clarity, specificity, depth, and coherence of the described health problem(s) and need(s) locally, regionally, or nationally of the target population;
- Clarity and consistency with the OMH mission and the purpose of this grant program; and
- Extent and outcomes of past efforts/activities.



# NEEDS ASSESSMENT

If you are starting a new project or considering an extension of an ongoing project, you need information on the health status of your community, available services and/or gaps in services within your community for two important reasons. *First, you need to know the current status, where you're starting from, so you can write reasonable goals and objectives for the project.* You need clear objectives to select the kinds of activities to provide. *The second reason is for evaluation: to assess the impact your project is having on the community.* You will not know if your project is having a positive or negative impact on your community if you do not collect baseline information at the beginning and during the project's implementation. The potential for renewed funding is greatly increased if you can demonstrate a positive impact on your community at the project's end.

A needs assessment is an organized, logical appraisal of the health status of your community, available services and/or gaps in services within your community. You will not be certain of what you need to focus on until the needs assessment is complete. Statistical data, especially when provided by local or state health departments, help to support the need for the project. When local data are unavailable, present the state and national data you do have and explain the reasons you believe conditions are as you portray them in your locality.

Needs assessments can be broad (looking at all specific services for a community) or narrow in scope (looking at a specific target population and its health needs). However, you need to limit and define the problem clearly and accurately. *Demonstrate to the reviewers that you understand the need or gap in service.* Do not assume the reviewer knows your community or your terminology - explain what you mean.

Is the project proposal concerned with the needs of the community or your organization's needs? If the needs of the community have not been assessed, the reviewers will not be able to determine who benefits: the community or your organization. Furthermore, developing a project without utilizing a needs assessment is much like taking a long trip without knowing your destination.

In this section of your proposal, you should identify the existing needs for health services for a specific group and support them with statistical data (e.g. teen pregnancy rates, alcohol/drug use rates). Always indicate the source of the statistical data you use. Based on the data, there are some basic questions that should be answered when describing these needs:

- Who are the individuals or groups (race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender, age, etc.) you are targeting?
- Who else is addressing these needs? Are the services accessible (location, language, cultural barriers, etc.)? What lessons have they learned that are applicable to the project? What factors indicate the need for more funds to address the need? If the project proposal is replicating a similar project, why are more funds required?
- What is the present status (level of service, language used, cultural context, number of people infected, etc.)?
- Are there specific gaps for health services and if there are gaps where do they exist (i.e., specific geographic areas/neighborhoods)?
- What are the underlying causes for the need?
- Why should these particular needs and this specific group receive attention at this time? Why did you pick this group? What is likely to happen if this project is not funded?
- Can the project realistically resolve the need?
- Is the need seen as important by other groups or organizations whose support and involvement might be critical to the success of the project?
- What obstacles or difficulties should be anticipated in implementing the project?

The answers to the above questions should provide a detailed explanation of the problem.

In defining the problem you need to demonstrate the following<sup>2</sup>:

- The community's involvement in determining the need;
- A complete understanding of the issues;
- Why are the particular needs you have selected important to the beneficiaries;
- Are there favorable conditions at this time for implementing the project;

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<sup>2</sup>Hall, Mary S Getting Funded: A Complete Guide to Proposal Writing. 3rd ed. (Portland: Continuing Education Publications, 1988), p. 109

- The particular aspect of the need which your project will address and how the need or gap in service you have selected is manageable;
- Your organization's present relationship with the target population (i.e., current services provided to the target population). Also discuss how funding will affect (enhance or expand) these services;
- Your organization's ability to carry out this project and how the need is related to your organization's purpose;
- The benefits your project expects to realize in terms of measurable improvements or products; and
- How your proposal is related to the funder's mission.

"The needs assessment must be sufficiently focused to assure the reviewers that your organization has the potential to solve the need or gap in service, given the time and resources requested in the proposal. A frequent mistake is to describe a massive and complex need but propose a project which addresses only a small part of the problem. Reducing the scope of the problem to a manageable level demonstrates knowledge and experience. Proposing too complex and expensive a project indicates inexperience or, at worst, someone that will promise anything in order to get funded."<sup>3</sup>

For any given need there may be a variety of approaches to both the solution and its implementation. Once a need has been clearly defined, the next step in refining the project idea is to consider as many alternative approaches for a solution as possible and to analyze the respective merits or disadvantages for both your organizations and the beneficiaries. Having made a choice on the particular approach to take, the applicant must also decide on the best method of implementation, e.g. should the training be conducted in a school or on the job? What is the anticipated cost-benefit for each method? What has been the experience of other organizations or individuals in launching similar projects? But most importantly, the project should be focused; the needs assessment should be manageable and solvable given the resources and the approaches selected.

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<sup>3</sup>ibid., p. 110

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

"The goals and objective statements are frequently confused because they describe a desired condition or outcome. However, these two types of statements usually differ in dimensions of specificity, accountability and time."<sup>4</sup> *The goal is a broad, long-term statement of what your project intends to contribute or accomplish. On the other hand, an objective is a short-term accomplishment and needs to be specific and measurable.*

Goals provide the ultimate purpose of the project. An objective, on the other hand, should be specific and concrete, result-oriented, measurable, time-specific, and address short-term accomplishments that logically lead to achieving the goal.

## GOALS

A goal is a general statement of what your project intends to accomplish or to contribute towards accomplishing as identified in the assessment of your community's needs. It is abstract in content and generally not measurable. Goals convey the overall intent or purpose of the entire program. They seldom have a deadline attached.

The goal statement of the project should:

- Reflect the long-term desired impact of the project on individuals, the community as a whole, or other target groups; and
- Reflect the program goals of the funder, as contained in the RFA.

Here are some examples of a goal:

- Improve the health status of African American children under 6 years of age in the Chicago area.
- To assist the Vietnamese community in Albuquerque, New Mexico in accessing medical care.

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<sup>4</sup>ibid. p 100

## OBJECTIVES

If a needs assessment identifies your destination, then objectives are the route by which you arrive at your destination. On a journey, when the objective is Cincinnati by Tuesday, you immediately know the moment the journey is finished: you're in Cincinnati on Tuesday.

*Objectives should be concrete and attainable results that can be measured and readily identified when you reach them.* Objectives should be precise. Writing time specific, result-oriented, and measurable objectives are crucial to addressing the problem you have identified. For objectives to be measurable, you should have gathered baseline information in the Needs Assessment section of the proposal in order to measure change.

Measurable objectives will ease your work. You will be able to regularly judge what is going right or wrong and what activities need to be continued, discontinued or modified in relation to the project's goal. The project staff will be clear on its activities and purpose.

Carefully stated objectives give everyone concerned, the funders, reviewers, and the grantee, a checklist of the activities being implemented. The objectives can serve as points of accomplishment in the timetable to keep track of progress. *Please keep in mind that objectives are not cast in stone. Objectives can be modified, at any time, when circumstances warrant and with approval of the funder.*

Proposals may have a mix of different types of objectives. You can have either outcome or process objectives depending on the needs of your project. Objectives are written to identify specific accomplishments and/or activities for which data should be collected during the activities that can be used to judge whether the objectives were achieved. It is best to only write one specific accomplishment (outcome) or activity per objective. You should also avoid stating "why" the desired results will be achieved.

A common mistake in proposal writing is to confuse outcome and process objectives:

an OUTCOME OBJECTIVE states the end result(s) or benefit(s) that will be realized from the activity; and

a PROCESS OBJECTIVE states the method employed in carrying out an activity in order to achieve an outcome.

The difference between the two is critically important because they each suggest different criteria by which you and others will later evaluate the effectiveness of your program. See the evaluation section for samples on how to develop evaluation worksheets for outcome and process objectives.

## OUTCOME OBJECTIVE

An outcome objective is a statement which defines a measurable result the project expects to accomplish. In health-related projects, outcome objectives are important because they facilitate the monitoring of the number of individuals reached, training material developed, and changes in knowledge and behavior in a given population over time.

Elements that should be contained in outcome objectives (product):

- Who is going to do what?
- What is going to be developed?
- How many will benefit?
- When will it be developed?
- How will it be developed?

Here is an example of an outcome objective (product):

- One year after receiving the grant (when), the Vietnamese Association (who) will organize a Vietnamese community health coalition (what) with a minimum of 10 CBOs (how many) signing a Memorandum of Understanding (how).

In the health education field, outcome objectives are important because they can facilitate monitoring of the numbers of individuals reached and changes in knowledge and behavior in a given population over time. Therefore, outcome objectives should be described in terms that measure what results your project expects to accomplish (e.g. increased knowledge about HIV/AIDS).

Elements that should be contained in outcome objectives (behavioral):

- Who is going to exhibit a behavior change?
- What behavior is expected to occur?
- Under what situation will the behavior be observed?
- How is behavior going to be measured?
- What amount of time is necessary to bring about the specific behavior?
- What is the expected proficiency level?"<sup>5</sup>

Here are some examples of outcome objectives (behavioral):

- At the end of a 4-day (time), in-service workshop (situation), the participating high school mathematics teachers (who) will confirm their comprehension of diagnostic and prescriptive techniques (what) as measured by a minimum gain of 10 raw score points (level) on a staff-development, pre- and post-test review (measurement tool).
- At the end of the 1-year grant (time), the neighborhood health clinic (circumstance) will have a 30 percent increase (level) in the number of preventative health visits (what) by the Vietnamese community (who) as measured by a pre and post of the attendance records (how).

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<sup>5</sup> ibid . p. 102

## PROCESS OBJECTIVES

Process objectives define an activity and/or method essential for achieving a given outcome objective or have a purpose that relates to a process.

Process objectives are important because they provide valuable information regarding the types of methods and the level of effort required to produce the desired results or outcomes. They also serve as the basis for formulating your work plan/strategy and assist in monitoring progress during each stage of the project. Keep in mind, funders are usually results-oriented rather than process oriented. In addition, process objectives are more complicated to evaluate than outcome objectives.

"In many cases, you may feel that processes which will significantly impact on project success are just as important as product outcomes. Process objectives can cover such areas as teaching, training, learning, material development, administration, counseling, evaluating, advisory group participation, and so forth.

"Before you write process objectives, you should ask yourself the following questions:

"Is the inclusion of this process as an objective essential for explaining the benefits of the project?

"Will the funding source understand why procedures and resources are included for this process unless it is mentioned as an objective?

"Will it be necessary to address this process as a significant element in the evaluation and/or is the process a major component of the proposal?

"If the answer to the above questions is yes, then a process objective should probably be written."<sup>6</sup>

Elements that should be contained in process objectives:

- What will be done?
- How it will be done?
- How much will be done?
- When will it be done?
- Who and how many will benefit?

Here are some examples of process objectives:

- To conduct 16 (how much) one-on-one (how) weekly street outreach sessions (what) with a total of 320 unduplicated individuals (how many) between the ages of 12 and 40 (who) living in the XYZ neighborhood (where) from the fourth through the eighth month of the project (when).

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<sup>6</sup>ibid., p. 105

- Eight months after receiving the grant (when) the CBOs participating in the coalition (how it) will increase the number of Vietnamese accessing medical care (what) by 30 percent (how much) to the Medical Center in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Step one to writing objectives is to ask yourself:

WHEN THE PROJECT IS COMPLETED, WHAT WILL THE CONCRETE OUTCOMES OR ACTIVITIES BE?

You should list the anticipated outcomes and/or activities and write them as the project's objectives.

"The project objectives may very likely be the most critical section of a proposal. Because they serve the purpose of stating what the project intends to accomplish, objectives constitute the basis on which reviewers will answer such questions as:

- "Is the project relevant to the funding source?
- "Will the project accomplish something that is significant, important, timely, innovative, and worthy of support?
- "Will the proposed outcomes really help solve an identified problem or need?
- "Are the intended outcomes of the project achievable?
- "Can the project be expected to result in data or information that will tell whether the project was a success? OR Can we learn from the project?
- "Are the suggested procedures appropriate to carry out the intended outcomes?
- "Is the budget reasonable to achieve the objectives?
- "Is the experience and training of key staff appropriate to implement the project?

"The fate of the project will rest on judgments made about the objectives."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> ibid., p. 107



# WORKPLAN

The workplan is your opportunity to demonstrate that you have thought through how the project will be successfully completed and the rationale for the budget. The workplan must convince the funder that you really know how to achieve the objectives and solve the need or gap in service that has been described in the Needs Assessment section. In addition, you must demonstrate that you are prepared to deal with issues that may arise during the implementation of the project. This section has to detail the procedures or methods that will be instituted to implement the project activities.

There are a number of problems commonly found in the workplan section of the proposal.<sup>8</sup>

- The workplan does not match the objectives. *The proposal may include objectives for which there are no plans of action; but it may also include plans of action that appear irrelevant and unrelated to any objectives.*
- The proposal does not include a workplan. *Instead of telling how the project will achieve an objective, the discussion goes back to why the project is necessary or what the results will be.*
- The workplan has no sound explanation. *The funder expects you to justify why you have selected a particular approach in the workplan.* This is because we know that problems can be solved in many different ways. You must convince the reviewers that you have selected the best one and justify your choice over other possible approaches.
- *The plan of action is not separated into distinct and manageable activities for each objective.*
- The plan of action does not deal with anticipated problems or possible obstacles. No contingencies are articulated, e.g. participant attrition.
- Evaluation is not included as an integral component of the workplan.
- The plan of action does not develop a strategy for the project's continuation when the present funding ends, e.g. seek new funding sources.

This section should describe how the project will work. It will probably be the longest section of the proposal because here you must describe in detail the major activities and methods you will employ in order to meet your objectives. The basic requirements of this section are clarity and justification. The methods should be understandable and should be

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<sup>8</sup>ibid., p. 115-116.

accompanied by an explanation of why you choose a particular strategy over another. The justification should also include a description of the project staff and the organization's capacity, credibility, and experience which is needed to make the project successful. In addition, explain other collaborations you are planning, and how specifically they will be carried out. *Include letters of agreement between you and other organizations stating specifically how they will assist in the implementation of the new project; endorsement letters should not be included.* Acknowledge efforts of others in your area conducting similar activities. If there are barriers to collaboration, explain them.

Carefully describe and justify the methods you have chosen. Define the methods so reviewers do not make assumptions regarding the types of activities that you have proposed. If you are proposing street outreach, you must explain why and who your target population will be. How does your project define street outreach? In what neighborhood? Are there other street outreach programs in the area? How will you coordinate with them? Will you provide prevention materials and how will these materials be selected? Will referrals for additional services be provided? Your plan should also summarize how project activities will be coordinated with other projects. For example, you might explain how clients will be referred to other projects. You should provide detailed information on what will happen once participants move into these additional services. A well thought-out work plan will help you in preparing the project's budget and in designing your evaluation strategy.

After completing the proposal's Workplan section, check off the following to insure that all the information for this section has been included:

- The major service components or types of effort to be undertaken (e.g., HIV/AIDS prevention counseling, support groups, bleach distribution, street outreach) and a justification for each of the methods chosen;
- A time line or chart that highlights the major project phases including people and/or organizations responsible, and list the beginning and end points of each activity in the project (a sequence for activities and how they will be implemented including responsibilities);
- Activities the project will undertake to assess/evaluate its progress at given intervals of time (e.g., quarterly, monthly);
- How the project will be managed and staffed;
- Organizational chart for the project;
- Linkages with local or state health departments and other appropriate service groups and organizations;
- Detailed letters of agreement with other organizations;
- The specific techniques to be used, materials to be developed and the number to be distributed, and the level of service to be provided (e.g., two training sessions per week, 3 hours each) that are related to specific objectives;

- The cultural context and the language that will be used to implement the project;
- How problems that arise during implementation will be handled; and
- How the project will be publicized.

Be as specific as possible and follow a logical sequence. Two sample workplans follow. The first sample can be used if you are planning an activity like a health coalition. The project staff and representative leaders must prepare and plan future steps which will be presented to all the members for discussion, modification, and agreement after the project is funded. The second illustration is for a sample workplan by individual objective. You have to decide which sample best suites your needs: explains your project proposal best to the reviewers and/or serves as a better management tool for the project staff.

*Sample Workplan for a Coalition Development Project*

<u>BEGIN</u>	<u>END</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>	<u>OBJECTIVE</u>
Wk. 1	Wk. 4	Develop. Cmte.	Define the coalition's purpose, what it will do and also what it will not do	Obj. #1
2	8	Develop. Cmte.	Decide on clear goals that relate to the purpose, and objectives that are measurable, time-specific, and tied to the goals	
6	12	Org. Cmte.	Decide on how administrative and financial arrangements will be handled during the formation period	
1	8	Develop. & Org. Cmte.	Decide on the best structure (board of directors, dues, membership, incorporate or not)	Obj. #2
1	12	Develop. Cmte.	Decide on who will lead the coalition;	
6	12	Org. Cmte.	Prepare formal eligibility criteria for membership	
12	18	Mbr. Cmte.	Prepare memorandum of understanding for agreements between members and coalition	Obj. #3
12	20	Work Plan Cmte.	Prepare a forward plan (list goals, objectives, tasks, timetables, and people or organizations responsible)	
20	22	Conflict Cmte.	Establish a procedure to address problems and conflicts openly to avoid factionalism	
20	24	Work Plan Cmte.	Establish a sustainability committee to seek new funding sources	Obj. #4

### *Sample Workplan by Individual Objectives*

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**Objective 2.1:** At the end of the 1-year grant (time), the neighborhood health clinic (circumstance) will have a 30 percent increase (level) in the number of preventative health visits (what) by the Vietnamese community (who) as measured by a pre- and post-verification of the attendance records (how).

<u>BEGIN</u>	<u>END</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>
Week 1	Week 2	XYZ CBO & hosp.	Review hospital attendance recording procedure
2	3	XYZ CBO	Discuss with the appropriate hospital staff the purpose of the project
2	3	XYZ CBO	Decide how pre- and post-verification of attendance records will be compiled
3	3	XYZ CBO	Review attendance records and calculate pre attendance numbers by Vietnamese community
5	5	XYZ CBO	Review hospital attendance procedure for accuracy and completeness
20	22	XYZ CBO, hosp. & comm.	Tabulate the records to determine if the project on target and take action if required
50	52	XYZ CBO	Tabulate the records and record the Vietnamese community attendance for the year
52	52	XYZ CBO	Discuss with the Vietnamese community and hospital staff the findings, interpretation, and implications, and report results to funder

**Objective 3.2:** To conduct 16 (how much) one-on-one (how) weekly street outreach sessions (what) with a total of 320 unduplicated individuals (how many) between the ages of 12 and 40 (who) living in the XYZ neighborhood (where) from the fourth through the eighth month of the project (when).

<u>BEGIN</u>	<u>END</u>	<u>RESPONSIBLE</u>	<u>ACTIVITY</u>
Week 9	Week 10	XYZ CBO	Design form to keep record of information required
10	11	XYZ CBO	Designate and train a staff person to keep the records
13	13	XYZ CBO	Review records keeping procedure for completeness and accuracy

*Sample Workplan by Individual Objectives - cont.*

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17	17	XYZ CBO	Tabulate records to determine if the project is on target and take action if required
33	33	XYZ CBO	Tabulate the records
35	35	XYZ CBO	Report to the community and the funder

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# EVALUATION

An evaluation plan is an essential element of your proposal. Evaluation helps you determine the project's success in achieving goals and objectives. An evaluation plan will also assist you in determining a need for change in your project during implementation. Most funders require the applicant to document the extent to which all the project objectives were achieved. It is extremely important that the evaluation plan be straightforward and simple, and that you have a separate evaluation plan for each project objective.

A good evaluation plan should not only provide for a summary of the results at the end of the project, but should also be an ongoing integral part of the program so that adjustments can be made as the project proceeds. Measurements of efforts should be conducted throughout the program, as well as at the conclusion. In addition, describe how you will monitor progress and handle problems that may arise. *An on-going evaluation plan which includes a monitoring system is an excellent management tool that permits you to assess whether or not you are providing services that benefit your community at various times during the project's implementation.*

Designing an evaluation plan that makes a convincing case for any positive changes brought about by your project demands:

- Gathering baseline information for before and after comparisons;
- Writing specific and measurable objectives;
- Preparing an evaluation worksheet that specifies by whom, when, how, and what data will be collected, analyzed, and reported;
- Building evaluation measures into the routine of program procedures;
- Using multiple measures, rather than a single measure, when possible (similar results establish credibility);
- Writing objectives that measure changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behavior rather than satisfaction of program participants which is important but does not usually impact on health; and
- Using program documents and record-keeping systems for on-going process evaluation.

Seek assistance in preparing the evaluation plan. A well-prepared evaluation plan can help you provide better service for your community, and the results can be used to gain additional funding. Funders like success. If you can prove that you have something that

can work, it is more likely to be funded. State and Federal agencies and local universities can be good sources of technical assistance in your community.

For a proposal to be successful, you will need to include a minimum of information on the evaluation worksheet so that the necessary planning is done and appropriate information is collected and not overlooked when the project begins.

There are two types of evaluations that can be used to evaluate projects: outcome and process evaluation. Process evaluation describes the implementation of a program while an outcome evaluation examines the effects, benefits, or results of the activities. The following samples will help you in preparing evaluation worksheets and illustrates the differences between how to evaluate outcome and process objectives.



*Sample of an Evaluation Worksheet for an Outcome Objective<sup>1</sup>*

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<b>Objective:</b>	<i>One year after receiving the grant (when), the Vietnamese Association (who) will organize a Vietnamese community health coalition (what) with a minimum of 10 CBOs (how many) signing a Memorandum of Understanding (how).</i>
<b>Information Requirement:</b>	Number of CBOs that signed the MOU.
<b>Information Source:</b>	1) Coalition Records 2) MOU
<b>Instrument:</b>	Coalition Records
<b>Design:</b>	Evaluator will review coalition records and MOU.
<b>Time Schedule:</b>	The evaluation will be conducted one month before the end of project period.
<b>Analysis:</b>	The coalition records will be used to determine the CBO attendance and willingness to sign a MOU.
<b>Report:</b>	1) An oral presentation will be given to the coalition 1 week before the submission of the evaluation to the funder (30 days after the funding concluded) and 1 year after the conclusion of the grant.  2) A written report to the funder reporting the complete evaluation findings will be sent 30 days after the funding concluded.

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<sup>1</sup> Table is based on Owens and Evans, *Program Evaluation Skills for Busy Administrators* (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, 1977), 39 and 40. in Hall, Mary S. Getting Funded: A Complete Guide to Proposal Writing. 3rd ed. Portland. Continuing Education Publications, 1988.

## *Sample of an Evaluation Worksheet for a Process Objective <sup>1</sup>*

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**Objective:** *Eight months after receiving the grant (when), the CBOs participating in the coalition (how it) will increase the number of Vietnamese accessing medical care (what) by 30 percent (how much) to the medical center in Albuquerque, New Mexico.*

### **Information**

**Required:**

- 1) Names of the CBOs that are part of the coalition.
- 2) Projects implemented by the coalition (including purpose, objectives, and outcomes).
- 3) Number of Vietnamese persons that use the medical center before and after the organization of the Vietnamese community health coalition.
- 4) The Vietnamese community's perception of accessibility of the medical center.

### **Instruments:**

- 1) Coalition records
- 2) Coalition member questionnaire
- 3) Medical center records
- 4) Vietnamese community questionnaire

### **Design:**

- 1) Evaluator will review coalition records.
- 2) Coalition members will fill out the questionnaire.
- 3) Coalition staff will review medical center Vietnamese attendance records before and after organization of coalition.
- 4) Vietnamese community will complete the questionnaire.

### **Time**

#### **Schedule:**

- 1) First activity, the coalition staff will review medical center attendance records of the Vietnamese community before organization of coalition.
- 2) Sixty days before the end of the funding, the evaluator will review coalition records.
- 3) Thirty days before the end of the funding, the coalition members will fill out the questionnaire.
- 4) Fifteen days before the end of the funding, the Vietnamese community will complete the questionnaire.

<sup>1</sup>Table is based on Owens and Evans, *Program Evaluation Skills for Busy Administrators* (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Education Laboratory, 1977), 39 and 40, in Hall, Mary S. Getting Funded: A Complete Guide to Proposal Writing. 3rd ed. Portland: Continuing Education Publications, 1988.

*Sample of an Evaluation Worksheet for a Process Objective - cont.*

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- 5) One day before the end of the funding, the coalition staff will review medical center attendance records of the Vietnamese community.

- Analysis:**
- 1) The number of persons from the Vietnamese community utilizing the medical center before the organization of the coalition will be tabulated and used as the baseline information to judge increased access.
  - 2) The attendance, signing MOU, and participation of the CBOs noted in the coalition records will be tabulated in order to determine involvement and commitment to the coalition.
  - 3) The information from the coalition member questionnaire will be tabulated to determine purpose, objectives, and outcomes of the projects implemented by the coalition to increase access to the medical center.
  - 4) The information from the Vietnamese community questionnaire will be tabulated to determine if the community has increased access to the medical center.
  - 5) The medical center's attendance records of the Vietnamese community will be tabulated and compared with the baseline information to determine increased access to the medical center.

- Report:**
- 1) An oral presentation to the Vietnamese community and the coalition by the evaluator will be given one week before the submission of the evaluation to the Funder (30 days after the termination of the funding).
  - 2) A written report to the Funder reporting the complete evaluation findings will be sent 30 days after the funding concluded.
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# BUDGET

Although a budget only represents an estimate of the cost of the project, the amounts should be as specific as possible and should be the minimum sufficient to support the project.

No one wants to waste money on a project whose budget proposal shows it is too expensive to justify anticipated results. *Realize that reviewers are experienced and familiar with budget realities.* If the budget appears inadequate for the proposed tasks, the reviewer's judgment will be just as negative as when too much is requested. When planning the budget, ask yourself some basic questions.

*What will the project cost? What are the direct costs, the indirect costs? Where is the money coming from? What is the contribution of the CBO submitting the proposal? Are matching funds available? What equipment is available, what will have to be purchased? Are the facilities you have suitable for the project, or will other facilities be required? What is the expected outlay for staff, support services, supplies, instrumentation, consultants, field trips, administrative needs?*

A good way to make certain the budget is kept equitable and sensible is to work on it conscientiously from the start of the proposal preparation process. Maintain a running budget as the planning proceeds. Get quotes. Put down the numbers as you proceed. Do not guess! *The biggest mistake in proposal writing is that budgets are dashed off without a review or thought.* You are running late, the deadline has arrived and the budget is the last piece to be finished.

Federal agencies require the use of application form 5161-1 when preparing a grant application. It contains a section entitled Budget Information (SF 424-A) with instructions. In addition to this form, the submission of a detailed budget justification for each category proposed is necessary. The budget justification should explain how each proposed cost relates to the objectives. Also include a computational explanation of how costs were determined.

The budget usually consists of direct and indirect costs. Direct costs are those costs that can specifically be identified with a particular project. Normally, most of the costs funded will be direct costs. For example, direct costs would be personnel, fringe benefits, materials and supplies, equipment, travel and contractual expenses. These costs can be identified specifically for a particular project in that without the project, there would be no costs.

Indirect costs are defined as those costs incurred for a common or joint objective and which, therefore, cannot be identified specifically to a particular project. These costs might include personnel for administration, accounting, procurement, or housekeeping. Other indirect costs might include rent, utilities, insurance, and taxes. These costs cannot be identified specifically to a particular project because without it, these costs would still exist.

Funders are concerned about the economic feasibility of a project proposal. Funds are limited, *and we want the most benefits from the funds congress appropriates to OMH. This can be accomplished only with a realistically budgeted project that does not waste funds on useless frills, but also does not cut corners or compromise the quality of the work to shave the budget a little closer to the fiscal bone.*

# WHAT IF?

If your proposal is not funded, ask for a debriefing. Remember, professional proposal writers do not expect to obtain funding for all their proposals. A 25 percent funding percentage is considered excellent. A debriefing will give you information on how to correct mistakes and to improve what you did right last time. When a proposal isn't funded, you need to know the reasons why for the next time.

Did you do something in the proposal you shouldn't have done?

Was the proposal well organized and well written?

Was the language clear and concise?

Did you omit something you should have included?

Which element(s) of the proposal caused a problem and why?

What was good about the proposal?

How could the proposal be improved?

Practice will gradually lead to better and better proposals, and better proposals will bring grants. Grant proposal writing is experiential; you improve by doing.

# MONITORING

Monitoring is the periodic collection and analysis of selected indicators to enable the project managers and the funder to determine if key activities are being implemented as planned and are having the expected effects on the beneficiaries. Monitoring provides feedback to the project management in order to take timely remedial action when needed.

Funders generally require measurement of the efforts throughout the project, as well as at the conclusion. You will need to include a minimum of information on a form like the Quarterly Report Format (QRF) displayed in the following page. The QRF provides the project staff and the funder with a summary of how the project is doing at specific points in time.

In the Input portion of the QRF, you specify the personnel (person months) and the financial (funder's funds, in-kind, matching funds, and/or other contribution) inputs per quarter in the Planned column that are necessary to achieve the project objectives. In the Output section, you specify the project objectives with their respective "indicator (s)" per quarter in the Planned column. The indicators should already be embedded in the objectives. *The indicator is the evidence that will determine whether an objective has been met or not.* There should be at least one indicator per objective.

After the project is funded, you can submit to the funder Quarterly Reports that provide actual figures indicating actual achievements for a specific quarter in order to keep the funding agency apprised of the project's progress. The positive and negative differences between the planned and actual achievements are indicated in the Deviation column. Reasons for successes (positive deviations) and delays/problems (negative deviations) will be explained in the narrative section.

Please keep in mind that inputs and objectives can and do change during the life of a project. When the project staff anticipates a change, the modification should be noted on the report as a change, and the reporting should reflect the new condition. For example, the number of training sessions may go up or down because of demand, and additional staff is required because the number of training sessions has gone from 3 to 6 in the third quarter. The report should be flexible so as to take into consideration growth and/or learning that a project experiences during implementation.

See next page for an example.

[illegible]



# APPENDIX

**REVIEW CRITERIA:** Applications will be reviewed and evaluated for technical merit and consistency with the requirements of the grant announcement. The following criteria under the listed headings are of specific importance. (An indication of the quantitative weight appears in parentheses after each heading):

## I. Needs Assessment [20%]

The proposal should reflect how the applicant's understanding of the problem and the organizational capacity and experience in providing services to the target population will facilitate implementation of the program. Criteria include:

- Clarity, specificity, depth, and coherence of the described problem(s) and need(s) locally, regionally, or nationally of the target-population;
- Clarity and consistency with the OMH mission and the purpose of this grant program;
- Extent and outcomes of past efforts/activities.

## II. Goals and Objectives [25%]

The proposal should reflect realistic, attainable objectives and a detailed, manageable work plan which is consistent with the objectives. Criteria include:

- Relevance of proposed goals to the stated problem and to the OMH mission and the purpose of this grant program;
- Merit of the proposed objectives, including their measurability and relevance to the stated project goals, and soundness/attainability of the time frame specified;
- Soundness/attainability of proposed impacts/results/products.

## III. Workplan/Strategy [35%]

The proposal should reflect an understanding of the target population's needs; and describe the specific intervention methods to be used in meeting the communities' needs. Criteria include:

### *Activities*

- Strength of specific activities proposed, including their scope and relevance to each of

the stated objectives and projected outcomes;

- Extent, strength, and depth of the proposed coalition activities;
- evidence that a product/model has the potential to benefit other minority communities.

#### *Process*

- Clarity and feasibility of project time schedule;
- Soundness and logic of the activities proposed;
- Efficacy of proposed linkages as related to enhancing the project's efforts.

#### *Target Population*

- Specificity of data on the intended target group;
- Soundness of approaches to reach and attain projected participation;
- Organizations' commitment to participate in coalition.

#### *Management/Staffing*

- Quality of academic and experiential background and soundness of proposed time commitment of Project Director;
- Quality of academic and experiential background and soundness of proposed time commitments of proposed key staff and consultants;
- Strength of applicant organization's capability to manage and accomplish the project.

#### IV. Evaluation Plan [20%]

The proposal should describe the information and data that will be collected to determine whether objectives have been met. Criteria include:

- Clarity and specificity of proposed qualitative and quantitative measures of project accomplishment;
- Soundness of proposed methods of data collection and their relationship to stated objectives;
- Soundness of proposed data analysis and reporting methods;

- Clarity and feasibility of project time schedule.

V. Sustainability Strategy

- Relevance, measurability, and attainability of the proposed objectives.

VI. Budget/Financial Plan

- Soundness of budget justification items as they relate to objectives; and
- Nature and extent of in-kind contributions.

VII. Progress Report (for currently funded OMH grantees)

- Strength of evidence that progress is being made under current OMH project grant.

VIII. Project Summary

- Coherence and completeness of project summary.

Read the instructions on the RFA packet, follow the instructions exactly without cutting corners, and eventually you'll have a responsive proposal, ready to submit *on time* that is clear, honest, straightforward, unencumbered with jargon, and no longer than is allowed (PHS puts page limits on most proposals). Such a proposal, and only such a proposal, gains a fair hearing for your project.

# REFERENCES

Hall, Mary S. Getting Funded: A Complete Guide to Proposal Writing. 3rd ed. Portland, OR: Continuing Education Publications, 1988.

Meador, Roy. Guidelines for Preparing Proposals. 2nd ed. Chelsea, MA: Lewis Publishers, Inc., 1991.

Technical Assistance Reports. Proposal Writing for HIV/AIDS Prevention Grants. Washington, D.C.: United States Conference of Mayors, Sept. 1992.

Note:

Mary Hall's Getting Funded can be purchased for \$27.95 from:  
Portland State University Press  
Continuing Education Press  
P.O. 1394  
Portland, Oregon 97207



